

LEADERSHIP FORMATION

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Evangelisation in the Power of the Holy Spirit

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TEACHING OUTLINE

1. **Everyone is involved in evangelisation**
2. **Everyone needs the power of the Holy Spirit**
3. **Everyone is a witness**
4. **The "Power from on high" is for everyone**

The Church exists in order to evangelise – it's her essential mission. Why? Because it is a question of people's salvation (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 5 & 14). So the presentation of the Gospel message is not an optional contribution for any of us – it's our duty not only to live it but also to proclaim it. Unfortunately this is something with which most Catholics have been neither familiar nor comfortable because it was not part of our teaching or experience. We used to see it as the work of specialists – priests and religious. Or perhaps we thought of it as an activity for Protestants, rather than something to which every Christian is called through baptism. But things have begun to change, and following the Decade of Evangelisation and Pope John Paul II's frequent references to the New Evangelisation, a lot of Catholics are at least aware how important it is to be playing an active part in the mission of the Church. The challenge which now faces us is that of equipping our Catholic people to be active evangelizers in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Everyone is involved

Effective evangelisation requires the gifts of every member of the Church. It requires bishops and priests



who are willing to teach, pastor, and encourage their people. It requires church communities into which the evangelized will be welcomed, where they will be nurtured, and will grow in their faith through good catechesis and formation. It requires a laity alive in the

faith, willing to be guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, with an understanding of the truths of their faith, and a willingness to take the Good News of Jesus Christ out into their places of work and recreation. In the closing words of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

"And may the world of our time be enabled to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the Kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world".

Can we be those joyful evangelizers, willing to risk everything, without the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives? I don't think we can. Evangelisation without the Spirit will be exhausting and fruitless. So as leaders, the challenge that lies before us is to make sure that our people have been baptized in the Holy Spirit so that they are equipped to answer the call to evangelise. It is to this



mission that every Christian is called. We are to be joyful witnesses to what God has done for us, and to proclaim in word and action what he longs to do for every single human being. We are called to go out in the power of the Holy Spirit to talk about the Jesus we know and love.

Everyone needs the power of the Holy Spirit

Although every Christian is called to evangelise, none of us is adequate for the task. We all need the power of the Holy Spirit, and this is why the message of the Charismatic Renewal is so important. We have an essential contribution to make in the whole area of evangelisation, because we have learned that the Good News can only be effectively proclaimed in the power of the Spirit. We are those who speak about a "before" and an "after", because we understand that nothing is impossible when we are willing to submit our lives to the Holy Spirit's transforming power. He is the principal agent of evangelisation, and no technique, system, or human enthusiasm can replace his gentle action. If we are open to him, he will equip us to do whatever is necessary. In *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 75 we find these words:

"It is the Holy Spirit who, today just as at the beginning of

the Church, acts in every evangeliser who allows himself to be possessed and led by him. The Holy Spirit places on his lips the words which he could not find by himself, and at the same time the Holy Spirit pre-disposes the soul of the hearer to be open and receptive to the Good News and to the Kingdom being proclaimed”.



When we read these words of Pope Paul VI, it becomes very clear that without the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us and in the hearer, we cannot expect our evangelisation to be fruitful. So Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the most effective preparation for a powerful presentation and proclamation of the Good News. Through it we will also be equipped with the gifts of the Spirit, which are so helpful when we are evangelizing. A

word of knowledge or a prayer for healing will have an amazing effect in authenticating our message of new life in Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelisation, and is most active in the Church when she is evangelizing (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 75), so we must expect to see the charisms at work.

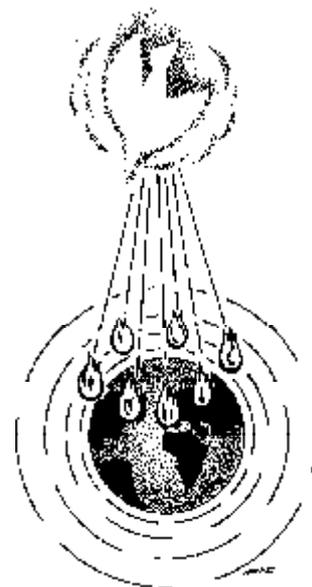
Everyone is a witness

Whilst we are all called to be part of the evangelizing activity of the Church, the word 'evangelist' brings to mind someone with a particular ministry for which they have been specially gifted. We certainly need more full-time evangelists who can proclaim the Gospel to large assemblies of people, but most of us are not called to this. Our calling, one that comes to every Christian, is the call to be witnesses to Jesus Christ. If we are disciples we are called to be witnesses too (Acts 1:7-8), and it is only as we witness that our joy will be complete (1 John 1:1-4). As

Pope Paul VI reminded us, modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers. When the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives, Jesus will take his rightful place as Lord and Saviour, and there will be no doubts in our minds that we are called to witness that God has called everyone to eternal life in his Son. In our work of evangelisation we must of course incorporate and give witness to the full message of the Gospel. This means that the witness of the way we live is an essential component. Do we really believe what we are proclaiming? Do we live what we believe? Do we preach what we live and live what we preach? The witness of life is an essential condition for effective proclamation. Equally important is our concern for social justice, and our challenge to every part of our society which is in contrast to the Word of God and the plan of salvation. Here too we need the power, wisdom, and guidance of the Holy Spirit if we are to have any effect on the values and structures around us.

The power from on high (Luke 24:49) is for everyone

Evangelisation and witness without the power of the Spirit is like trying to travel in a car which has no engine. We will not get very far. That is why Jesus said to his disciples that they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and THEN they would be his witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Before we send them out, let's make sure that we have equipped those we lead to evangelise in the power of the Holy Spirit. After all, that's the way it's intended to be in God's plan, and the teaching of the Church in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* reminds us of this.



Questions for discussion

1. **As a leader, am I still teaching and ministering the Baptism in the Holy Spirit at every opportunity?**
2. **Are my prayer group or community actively engaged in evangelisation?**
3. **Is my local church a place where those who have been evangelized are welcomed and nurtured? If not, what can I do to help?**
4. **Are the gifts of the Holy Spirit present in my prayer group or community, and are we expecting to see them when we evangelise?**

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